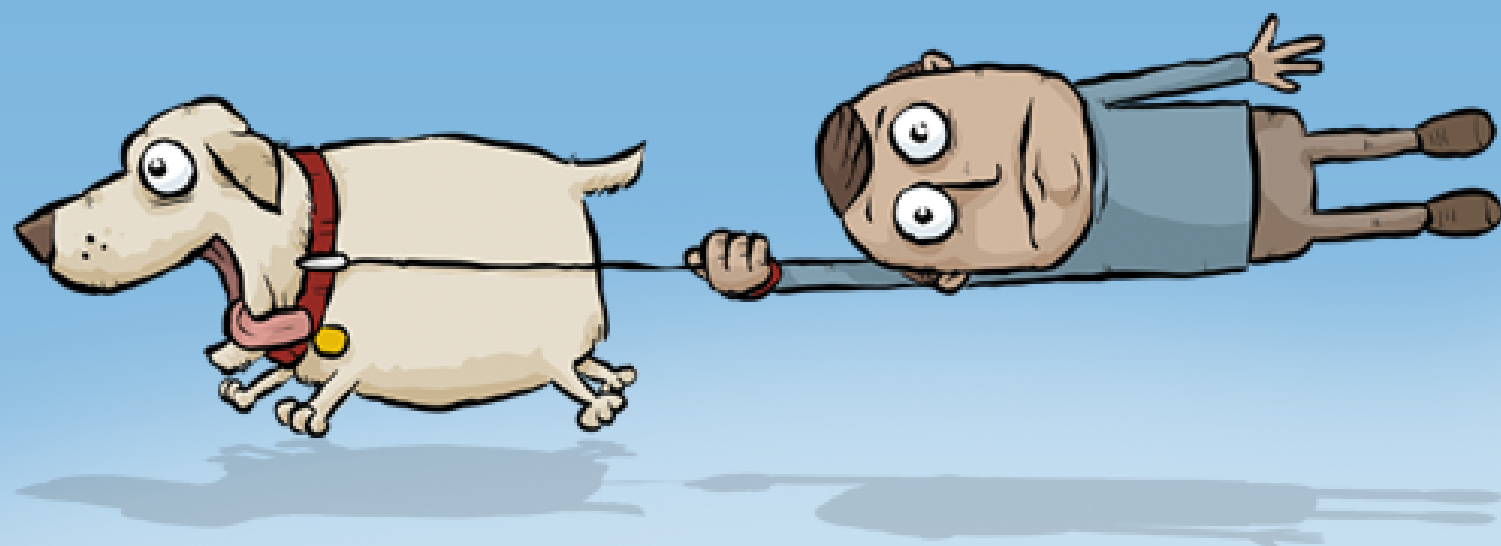


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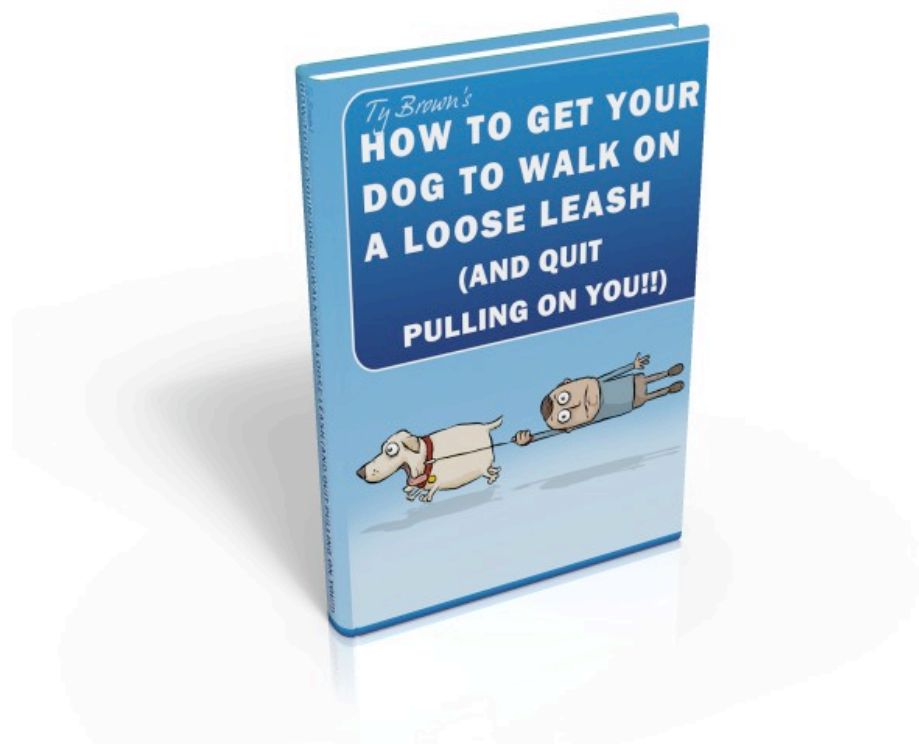
# HOW TO GET YOUR DOG TO WALK ON A LOOSE LEASH (AND QUIT PULLING ON YOU!!)



*How To Get Your Dog To Walk On A Loose Leash...  
And Quit Pulling On YOU!!*

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# ***How to Get Your Dog To Walk On A Loose Leash...***



*And Quit Pulling On You!*

**By Ty Brown**

**Okay, by a show of hands how many of you dog-ski? Don't know what that is? Sure you do. Go to any neighborhood in America right now and look for someone walking their dog. I'd say that you have a pretty decent chance that the owner is dog-skiing down the sidewalk. By that I mean that the owner is holding the leash for dear life while his dog is dragging him down the sidewalk at full speed. Is this a familiar sight?**

I thought so.

The focus exercise is going to teach your dog to walk on a leash by your side and keep the leash loose at all times. Trust me, it is much more enjoyable to walk a dog when you can enjoy the scenery at a normal pace and don't have to be worried about being pulled into oncoming traffic by your over-eager best friend.

Walking your dog under control is much better for your dog as well. When a dog goes on a 'skiing' walk he is expending some physical energy. There is very little mental energy used, however. His mind is in an uncontrolled state as he vigorously pulls on the leash in whatever direction he feels like. When a dog goes on a walk by your side, however, both physical and mental energy become depleted. Not only is the dog exercising by walking but he also must pay strict attention to where you are and where you are going. This poses a mental challenge for the dog. This is a good thing. A dog that is exhausted both mentally and physically is much less likely to chew, dig, bark incessantly, and perform other destructive and annoying behaviors that most dog owners wish to get rid of.

Some might be thinking, "Well, my dog doesn't pull me relentlessly. What then?" It's okay that your dog doesn't pull you down the road, however, you are still going to need to teach the focus exercise. The focus exercise is a precursor to the heeling exercise. Some might be wondering "The focus exercise teaches the dog to walk calmly by my side. If Buddy is walk-

ing calmly by my side, isn't that heeling?" The answer is yes and no. Let me define the difference between the two exercises.

The focus exercise teaches your dog to walk calmly on your left hand side. With this behavior your dog can be a little ahead of you or a little behind. He can be stuck to your left leg or a foot away from your body. During the focus exercise he is also allowed to lift his leg if he needs to, or smell that interesting flower, and basically do whatever he wants, as long as he is walking calmly with a loose leash.

Heeling, however, is much more strict and precise. While he is heeling Buddy is basically stuck to your left leg, not ahead or behind, not too far to the left. He also isn't allowed to lift his leg or do any flower smelling. Pretty strict, huh?

Well, it is strict and that is why you are going to reserve the heeling exercise for certain occasions. You certainly wouldn't want to heel with your dog while you take him for a walk, he wouldn't be allowed to do anything that dogs need to do on walks. It wouldn't be a lot of fun for him or you.

What I tell my clients is that you want your dog to be a dog on your walks, but also under control. That is where the focus exercise comes in. When there are times that you need more control, that is where heeling comes in. Heeling will be valuable for Buddy at the vet's office and the pet store and the picnic at the park and in other places and situations where you are going to need a high level of control because of the circumstances. Heeling is also a necessary exercise for those of you who are going to want to do obedience competitions with your best friend.

When it comes to going on a walk, though, keep things much more casual. Use the focus exercise and he will be able to feel like a dog. A dog, however, that is under control.

## **Getting Started**

Okay, so lets get started. You are going to need a bit of space to start out with this exercise. Find yourself an open area that is relatively free of distractions. Use a backyard or vacant lot, soccer field, quiet parking lot, or anywhere you can spread out a bit to train. Start out by saying your dog's name followed by 'lets go'.

All right, you caught me. I know I said earlier that you shouldn't use your dog's name before a command. I stand by that principle, except in this case. The focus exercise is not only going to teach your dog to walk calmly on a loose leash but it is also going to teach him to react to his name. I have found that most dogs know their name until their owner really wants them to know their name. What I mean is that most dogs will listen to their name when it is meal time, casual time, around the house, around the yard, etc. But just wait and use his name when he is into something that he shouldn't be, or distracted by something and you don't have much chance of him turning his head to see what you want. In using his name with the focus exercise you are going to attach a new meaning to his name. You are going to show him that he must listen to his name.

I like to use the dog's name with only this command. I find that if you use his name with every command that the air soon becomes inundated with his name. Everything becomes 'Buddy this' and 'Buddy that'. I like to reserve his name for times when you just need him to pay attention to you.

Okay, so you've said, "Buddy, lets go" now, start walking. Make sure you start going somewhere. A mistake I see people make is to tell their pal 'lets go', but they just stand in place. Sounds silly, I know, but you will be surprised at some of the silly things you do when you are trying to keep

track of several things in your head at one time. Poor Buddy is left to wonder where he is supposed to go.

So now that you are moving Buddy has the option to go anywhere, right? He might pull forward, lag behind, go right or left, or just about anywhere. With this exercise you are going to base every one of your movements on what Buddy does first. In essence you will react to his every movement.

What you are going to do in response to his movement is what I like to call the 'crazy man technique'. What I mean is, if Buddy goes too far forward you are going to do an about-face and give a sharp correction as you repeat the command, while going in the opposite direction. If he goes too far to the left you are going to make a 90 degree turn to the right, give a correction, repeat the command, and go off in that direction. He goes to your right hand side, you do an immediate u-turn, make sure he is on your left hand side, give a correction, repeat the command and keep going. If you do it correctly you will soon understand why I call it the 'crazy man technique'. Your dog will soon think, "Man, I go forward he goes the other way, I go left he goes right. No matter which way I go he is going the other way. This guy is crazy, I had better watch out for him so I can avoid these pesky corrections!"

Ladies and gentleman, we want him to think you are nuts. We want him to realize that the only way to avoid the corrections is by walking calmly on the left hand side. That means that any time he is calm on the left hand side we are going to praise him. Any time he is not walking calmly on the left hand side we are going to change directions, give a correction as we repeat 'lets go' and move in the opposite direction. He will be required to pay attention to you for the first time.

The focus exercise is what I call a moving exercise. A moving exercise is any exercise where your dog must move or change his location to com-

plete the behavior. Moving exercises are 'come-on' and 'come here' and 'heel'.

All of the moving exercises are going to have what I call a 'safe spot'. The safe spot is the area that your dog must move to in order to avoid corrections and to receive praise. With the focus exercise the safe spot is the left hand side. The dog can be right next to your leg or a few feet away. He can be a bit ahead of you or a bit behind. The safe spot with coming when called is to come and be next to the owner. The safe spot with heeling is being stuck to the left of the owner. The safe spot is the area that the dog learns to gravitate toward. In the safe spot there are no corrections and there is plenty of praise. This way the dog learns a black and white principle. Inside the safe spot everything is great, avoid being outside of the safe spot because it is uncomfortable.

I gave a brief overview of how this exercise is performed but now let me get into the nuts and bolts of this exercise. You are ready to train and you find yourself in the field, or wherever you happen to be, with your pal Buddy. Start out from a stand-still and say, "Buddy, lets go" and start walking. Let's say that Buddy rushes out way ahead of you. He wants to go dog skiing. He is now out of the safe spot which requires a correction and a change of direction in order to get him back inside the safe spot.

Your timing is going to be very important here. You want to time your correction so that he gets corrected before he has a chance to pull on the leash. So as he is running forward make a 180 degree turn toward the right and give a quick, firm correction in the new direction that you are moving and repeat 'lets go'. All this needs to be completed in one swift movement. And like I said you need to time your turn and correction before he has a chance to start pulling you. It is also important to make sure that your correction is a jerk and release, just as it has been for the other exercises. It is more difficult with this exercise, though, because your dog is moving in the other direction.

If you aren't quick enough he is going to pull you before you have a chance to correct. The key here is to never let the leash be tight, except for the brief second that it is tight while you are correcting. Remember that: The leash must always be loose. Always!!! The very split second after correcting the leash must return to being loose. I can't emphasize this enough.

If you don't do it like this you will just end up pulling and dragging your dog all over the place instead of teaching him to stay in one safe spot.

Okay, so now you know what to do if he rushes ahead and tries to get you to dog-ski. Now let's say that you have corrected him and now are heading your new direction. Buddy now cuts over to the right side, which is not in the safe spot. You must immediately make an about face, this time turning to your left to get him back on your left side. Correct him as you repeat 'lets go' and head back the other direction. By doing a 180 degree turn to your left it will automatically put him back on your left side.

At this point it is very important to remember your praise. This is a very new exercise for Buddy and chances are he is at the stage in the learning cycle of either confusion or being overwhelmed. He tried to go forward and that didn't work, he tried going right and that didn't work either and now he is on the left and ... lo and behold, that just might be it. There are no more corrections and he is getting all this praise.

Keep in mind, Buddy is not going to learn as quick as this. It won't be a matter of a few corrections and now he knows to stay on the left. It is going to take several sessions to get Buddy to arrive at the 'Ahaa'. If you consistently show him that the left hand side is the safe zone and the other areas are not it won't be long before he just voluntarily stays in that safe zone and doesn't test the waters every time that he hears the command 'lets go'.



Buddy, at this point, is allowed to lag a bit or be ahead a bit. If he lags too much, however, give him a quick little jerk on the leash in the direction you are moving and motivate him with praise.

Practice makes perfect. Keep working at it and soon you will notice that you don't have to change directions any more because Buddy realizes where the safe zone is and has learned to focus on you during your walks. One thing I always recommend with this command is to take it to the streets. Use as many distractions as you can find. One of my favorites is to find a neighborhood dog behind a fence. Normally when you walk by a dog like that he goes crazy barking and charging the fence. Great! Use that dog. Go to that area right outside the fence and practice the focus exercise. He will likely mess up a lot in the beginning, that's okay. Keep at it and soon your dog will understand that it doesn't matter what distraction is going on, there is only one proper way to walk on leash. Do this in front of enough similar type distractions and you will have the perfect walker.

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**Give your dog the command 'let's go' and start walking.**

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**When your dog is walking properly on your left hand side give him plenty of praise.**

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**When your dog starts to go to far in any direction it is your job to change directions, give a correction as you repeat the command, and continue in the new direction.**

## **Troubleshooting**

With the focus exercise I have, at times, seen dogs get quite confused in the beginning stages. They are sometimes not sure which way is going to allow them to be free of corrections. So occasionally you will see a dog that keeps bolting to the end of the leash, trying to flee your side in order to get away from the corrections. Sometimes these dogs will yelp or scream a bit. I know it is not a pleasure to have happen but you must stick with the exercise. The tendency of some owners is to quit the exercise out of pity or compassion. While compassion is a good thing to have you must persist with this exercise.

Look at it from your dog's point of view. You begin the focus exercise and start to move. Your dog, in his confusion, goes the wrong direction several times and gets corrected. Upon getting corrected he screams and whimpers and keeps bolting. Because you feel so bad in causing such discomfort to your friend you stop the exercise. What has he learned? When confused, go a little bit crazy and your owner is there to make things better. Buddy didn't learn that when confused he should find that left hand side and walk calmly. The only way to teach that is to stick with the exercise and show him that the only way to avoid corrections is not through bolting, or screaming, or digging in your heels, or whatever else, but it comes from staying on the left hand side and walking calmly.

After several sessions of following these principles you will have successfully shown him that when you say his name followed by 'lets go' he should follow on your left hand side.

## **Proofing the Focus Exercise**

As with the other exercises take this one to areas that are busier like a city street or a large pet store. On-lookers may think you are crazy as you erratically change directions, but who cares? Dog owners are all a little bit crazy anyway, right?

As I mentioned before it may be a good idea to proof the 'sit' and 'lie down' along with the 'lets go' all in the same session.

With the 'lets go' you are actually going to need very little integration. Basically the only time you are going to tell him lets go is when you go on walks or at other times when he is on leash.

When you are around the house most of the time you will tell him 'come on' or whatever word you like to use to get him to follow you from room to room.

Having said that, it is always a good idea to integrate every exercise. So throughout the day sporadically grab the leash and tell him 'Buddy, lets go' and do a quick little session from one room to the next.

## **Case Studies**

Back when I was about fifteen years old I was working for a dog trainer and we were teaching a group obedience class. This was a class of about fifteen dogs with their owners.

In the third week of classes we were teaching the focus exercise. We explained the principles of the behavior and set everyone to the task. Within moments everyone stopped what they were doing and stared in awe at one of the dogs.

It was a mixed breed dog who had progressed rather nicely when training. He sat when told, lied down when commanded and his owner was turning into a good dog trainer. When his owner started with the focus exercise, however, it was as if we had uncorked a bottle of noise.

With every turn, with every correction, the dog would scream at the top of his lungs. He would dig in his feet and refuse to move. His owner would try to correct him into following him but the dog wanted to do nothing of the sort. People from around the park even began to gather to watch what seemed to be a canine torture session. It sounded as if someone was playing a poorly stringed violin at top volume. It was embarrassing. Everyone couldn't help but stop and see what was causing such a ruckus.

The reality was that his owner wasn't being too hard on the dog. He was actually doing the behavior correctly. This was the dog's way of protesting. It was his way of saying that he didn't want to comply. As I continued to watch the dog I noticed a funny thing. The dog would yelp at times when he wasn't being corrected. He would be walking along and just dig in his heels and bark. He was faking. It was the first, but not the last, occasion where I saw a dog attempt to stop the training session by faking injury or discomfort.

The owner continued, however, with the exercise. Over the course of several training sessions the dog soon learned that his protests were falling on deaf ears. He soon fell in line and learned to happily follow along at the command of his owner. The following week when the dog and owner returned to class the dog happily performed the focus exercise without a single protest.

Beware of clever dogs. Dogs can be much more intelligent than we give them credit for. Be firm but fair with your dog and if he tries to fake you out, don't fall for it. If you stick with the correct training principles you won't go wrong.



## **Chapter Nine - Teaching Your Dog to Heel**

Don't move on to the heel exercise until your dog has mastered the 'lets go'. You know that your dog has mastered this exercise when upon hearing 'lets go' he will calmly following you on your left hand side.

Before I get into how you are going to heel with your dog let me define what heeling is. I have seen many owners erroneously say that their dog knows how to heel when all the dog really does is walk on a leash.

Heeling got its start with hunting dogs. The hunters needed to have their dog in a certain position and under control, and since the shell casings from their guns would exit to the right they decided to put the dog on the left. Thus heeling was born.

Do you remember in the last exercise when I told you about the safe spot. The safe spot in moving exercises is the area where there are no corrections and there is plenty of praise. With heeling, the safe spot is an imaginary box that starts at your left knee, extends the width of your dog, and the length of your dog.

When you are heeling your dog must remain in this imaginary box and be attentive to you. When you stop the dog must perform the automatic sit which is exactly as described; he sits automatically as you come to a halt.

When he is heeling he is not allowed to sniff along the ground, lift his leg, say hello to another dog or person, or anything that isn't remaining tightly in the imaginary box.

The way we are actually going to start this exercise is in a standing still position. Remember, when the dog is under the heel command and you aren't moving he must be sitting calmly by your side.

Start out by having your dog sit. Now, position your body so that Buddy is in the heel position. By that I mean go to his right side. Choke up on

the leash with your right hand to where you have it within about a foot of his head while maintaining slackness in the leash. Your left hand is positioned near his rear ready to guide it back into the sitting position if he moves.

If you are trying this right now with your dog, unless you have a Great Dane, you are probably squatted down a bit and leaning backward. Perfect! That is how you should be right now. So as you have him sit and put yourself into the half-squat position give Buddy the command 'heel'. Remember to say it in a normal tone of voice.

Okay, now what? Well, nothing. If Buddy stays in position he is doing what he is supposed to be doing for the heel. He is heeling. Good job!

All right, it's not that simple. If Buddy moves at all from this position you are going to immediately give him a correction straight up in the air with your right hand as your left hand immediately guides his rear into position as you repeat 'heel'. Make sure his body stays parallel to yours.

I want you to do many sessions of this. This may seem a bit boring because you aren't moving at all but believe it or not you are teaching him a valuable lesson about where the imaginary box or safe spot is located. Have him remain in the prone heeling position for a minute or so and tell him to 'break'. Repeat several times during a session.

This part is obviously only the first part of heeling. I am going to break down the exercise into heeling in the prone position and heeling while moving. I am going to instruct you to do two proofing stages for the heel. You will proof the exercise both in the prone and in the motion segments of the behavior.

## **Proofing the Heel in the Standing Position**

There are several ways to proof the heeling exercise while prone. All of them have the same goal in mind. That is, we want Buddy to get out of position so that we can correct him back into position and show him the right way to do the exercise.

Enlist some neighborhood kids to throw a ball past Buddy as he sits in the heel position. Have someone try to entice him out of the heel position with tidbits of food. Do this exercise in a crowded area. Whatever you do, try to make Buddy break the heel position. That's right. We want him to have failures. The only way that Buddy can really learn is by failing and being shown how to avoid that failure in the future. So when a neighborhood kid throws a ball past Buddy and he goes to get it you are going to quickly correct him with an upward correction with your right hand as your left hand guides his rear back to the ground. When someone has a tasty tidbit and Buddy tries to get it you will be quick to correct him back into the heel position. In setting him up with distractions and correcting him for it you are showing him that no matter what the circumstances, he must obey.

## **The Next Step in Heeling**

Okay, the next step is what you have been waiting for, heeling with actual movement. You are going to start this next phase where you left off with the last one, with Buddy sitting calmly by your side in the heel position. Begin by walking with your left foot and give him the command 'heel'.

As you heel it is important to always lead with your left foot. The left foot leading will become somewhat of a non-verbal cue that you are going to be heeling. Later on, when we teach the 'stay' command, you are going to lead with your right foot. So down the line Buddy is going to learn that left foot equals heeling and right foot means that he must stay.

So begin with your left foot and start moving. Your behavior now is going to be the exact same as it was with the 'lets go' exercise with one difference. With the 'lets go' you taught Buddy that he basically had to be on your left side and he was okay. A little behind or a little ahead or a little to the left and he was fine. Every direction he went that was incorrect you went the opposite.

With heeling you are also going to go the opposite direction, except you are going to be much more strict. Do you remember the definition of heeling I gave in the beginning of this section? With heeling he has to be in that small, Buddy sized, imaginary box on your left hand side. So with heeling, the very instant he gets a few inches ahead, you are going to do a u-turn. If he lags only a little you are going to give him quick little jerks on the leash while moving in the direction that you are going. If he goes a little to the left you are going to give him corrections toward your body so that he knows that the safe spot is right next to your leg.

If your dog thought you were crazy before with the 'lets go' command he is really going to think you are nuts now. Do you want to know something, though? He is really going to love it. The very nature of this exercise causes it to be a stressful behavior. There is a lot of movement and

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confusion in the beginning stages. You will notice, however, that as you progress with the behavior and your dog begins to understand what is desired of him that you both will enjoy working as a team. Make sure that you make Buddy love this exercise by loading on the praise when he is in the imaginary box. Talk to him, pet him as you walk. Make it fun to work together as a team!



**Start out with your dog in the heel position, meaning he is on your left hand side.**

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**Tell your dog 'heel' as you step with your left foot.**

**If your dog gets out of the proper 'heel' position give a quick correction back into the right spot.**

## **Teaching the Automatic Sit**

Okay, so now you are moving. What about stopping? Wasn't he supposed to do something when you stop? That's right. Buddy has to automatically sit as you come to a halt. Here is how you are going to train this. As you are getting ready to stop use your right hand to pull up on the leash and let your left hand trail behind you a bit near his rear section. As you stop, your right hand is going to make tension upward as your left hand immediately guides his rear into the sitting position still inside the imaginary box. At this stage, however, don't tell him to sit, simply guide his rear into the sitting position.

You might be questioning my earlier rule. That rule was, there is always a free command for every exercise. Well that is still the case. The command to sit is normally a verbal 'sit', but in this case the command for Buddy to sit is a non-verbal cue. That cue is you stopping, so the act of you coming to a halt will become the command to sit while doing the heeling exercise. You coming to a stop actually becomes his free command.

If you do this well, Buddy is going to become very aware of your every move when heeling. He is going to know that he has to watch you very closely because you are very prone to moving in a new direction. If you can time your corrections well and give plenty of praise when he is deserving, the end result will be a happy team working together.

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**As you are slowing down to stop choke up the leash with your right hand as your left hand gets ready to guide your dog's rear toward the ground.**



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**As you stop your right hand creates upward tension as your left hand pushes down on your dog's rear, encouraging him to sit.**

## **More Proofing with the Heeling Exercise**

Again, take this exercise to public places and in no time you will have him glued to your side no matter what the circumstances. Use whatever you can as a distraction to make this exercise perfect at all times.

Once Buddy is doing a good job heeling with various distractions it is also time to wean him off the help with the automatic sit. Up until this point every time you stop you have been giving him tension with the right hand and guidance with the left. He should understand by now that when you stop, he sits.

Now what you are going to do is come to a stop without that help. If Buddy sits, give him some praise. If he doesn't, instead of helping him with tension, you are going to give him a correction straight in the air. You don't need to repeat 'sit', he has already received the command to sit, remember? His command was you coming to a stop. So correct him until he sits and then heap on the praise.

Also, remember that when you come to a stop and Buddy automatically sits that he has to stay there until you allow him to do something else. If you do the automatic sit, go to praise him and he moves, you must correct him back into position. The best way to release him from the heel position is by using the 'break' command. Make sure you are using the 'break' command in all of your training sessions to add more fun to the session for Buddy. In other words, do a few minutes of training and then have him 'break'. Do a few more minutes and have him 'break' again. Do a few more minutes and then finish the session with another 'break'. Training is going to be stressful at times and using the 'break' command is going to help combat some of that stress.

Like the 'lets go' the 'heel' command is not going to need too much integration in the house. Most people don't have a need for their dog to heel in the house as it is an exercise to have control in outdoor situations. Al-

though you wont have a functional need to heel in the house it is still a great idea to do some integration indoors with this exercise and let Buddy know that at any time he might have to heel.

## **Case Studies**

I own a Rottweiler named Rocco. He is a great dog. He has an hilarious personality. He is great with my young daughters. He loves hanging out with me and is incredibly loyal, obedient, and is a fierce protector of our home.

He doesn't like all other dogs, however. Rottweilers are often known for not getting along with other dogs and he is no exception. It wasn't for a lack of effort, though. When he was a puppy I socialized him with hundreds of dogs. As he matured he simply decided that he could get along with most dogs well, just not all dogs.

Rocco has excelled at obedience training. He is a fast learner and has picked up obedience behaviors happily and without protest. One thing he loves to do is heel. As I trained him I made sure that I made the exercise very black and white for him. I taught him about the safe spot next to my left hand side. Outside the safe spot I corrected him firmly but fairly and inside the safe spot I heaped on praise liberally. As a result when he is heeling he looks up and trots happily. His little nub of a tail wags and his mouth hangs open in pleasure. He has learned that this is a good place to be.

I like to take Rocco on walks every day. I live in a quiet neighborhood and people generally keep their dogs indoors or in the back yard. On occasion, however, we come across dogs that are loose on the streets. This can be a recipe for disaster. Dogs that approach are sure to be met with hostility from Rocco. Over time Rocco has learned that showing aggression is unacceptable to me. As a result, any approaching dog is cause for great stress. Rocco doesn't want the dog to approach yet he knows that showing aggression will cause a negative reaction from me.

So what is his solution for dealing with stress? He defaults into the heel

position. That's right, without me even asking he will jump to my left hand side and put himself into the safe spot.

When he first started doing this it perplexed me. And then like the proverbial light bulb lighting up, it all made sense. Dogs, like humans, will gravitate to whatever is the most pleasurable action and what causes the least amount of discomfort. An approaching dog would cause discomfort for Rocco so his mind needed to immediately find a solution. He needed to find a way to alleviate the stress. The solution for him was the safe spot. He knows that aggression results in a correction from me. He also knows that heeling results in no corrections and will actually get him praise.

Our walks are much better now. I still get upset to see dogs walking loose in the neighborhood but we are able to quickly navigate past them without any incident.

All the behaviors you teach your dog, if done correctly, will become very pleasurable to your dog. They will feel safe for your dog and will actually help your dog be more happy.